

**Remarks of
ANNETTE M. SANDBERG, ADMINISTRATOR
FEDERAL MOTOR CARRIER SAFETY ADMINISTRATION
to the
COMMERCIAL MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY BELT PARTNERSHIP
DRIVER BREAKFAST/PRESS CONFERENCE
MID-AMERICA TRUCK SHOW
LOUISVILLE, KY
APRIL 1, 2005**

Thank you, Steve, and thanks very much to all of you for coming this morning. I want to congratulate the members of the Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Belt Partnership for your support and hard work since December 2003 when the partnership began.

This initiative is so important because safety belts, in many cases, are lifesavers. In 2003 we lost nearly 43,000 people on our Nation's highways. Of that number, nearly 5,000 deaths were related to commercial motor vehicles, including 620 truckers. The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) have a very aggressive goal to reduce the number of fatalities on our Nation's highways. We have committed to reducing the rate of fatalities by 41 percent from 1996 to 2008.

We all know there is no single solution to preventing crashes, deaths and injuries on our highways. So, we must do *everything* we can to protect our lives and wellbeing on the road. Commercial motor vehicle drivers already have a lifesaving piece of equipment in their vehicles—safety belts. They help ensure you remain securely in your seat, do your job safely, and return home to the ones you love.

At DOT and FMCSA, we're trying to increase safety belt use among *all* drivers in two ways. Together with the Safety Belt Partnership, we are asking commercial motor vehicles drivers to buckle up. The more drivers realize the benefits of wearing a safety belt, the more lives will be saved. And, we're doing everything we can to encourage more States to pass primary safety belt laws. Primary safety belt laws have proven effective wherever they exist. Of course, drivers have had a primary safety belt requirement for a long time—in the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations.

To all of you who buckle up as soon as you get behind the wheel of your rig, thank you for setting a great example. You are the true leaders in this effort. I ask you to continue leading by encouraging your friends and fellow drivers to wear their safety belts, too. We want *all* drivers to return home safely—every time.

Now, it's my pleasure to introduce the man who has inspired us at DOT to improve highway safety across the Nation. He, too, is a leader in the effort to help make sure all drivers buckle up. Please welcome the U.S. Secretary of Transportation, the Honorable Norman Y. Mineta.